

ON THE INTRODUCTION OF VOLUNTARY STATE DISCOUNT PRESCRIPTION DRUG PLAN ACT OF 2007

HON. CHRIS VAN HOLLEN

OF MARYLAND

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, August 1, 2007

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. Madam Speaker, I am pleased to introduce the Voluntary State Discount Prescription Drug Plan Act of 2007—a completely voluntary, commonsense way to offer prescription drugs at affordable prices to millions of Americans currently struggling without prescription drug coverage.

This legislation would enable States, at their option, to create State discount prescription drug plans that extend Medicaid-negotiated rebates to citizens up to 300 percent of the poverty line and thereby provide discounts of roughly 40 percent to 50 million uninsured Americans—all at their local pharmacies, all at no cost to the Federal or State Government. Just like HMOs and insurance plans in the private sector, participating States would simply leverage their purchasing power to secure better prices on behalf of their citizens. In that regard, our bill would explicitly authorize recent prescription drug affordability initiatives in States like Maryland, Maine, and Vermont by removing barriers that have needlessly blocked these efforts in the past.

In 2005, my home State of Maryland passed a State discount prescription drug plan law with the near unanimous support of our General Assembly and our then Republican Governor Robert Ehrlich. Unfortunately, that plan was subsequently blocked by the Bush administration's Center for Medicare & Medicaid Services, CMS, for reasons that have never been credibly explained. As a result, the broad bipartisan will of our State has been thwarted and hundreds of thousands of Marylanders have been deprived needed access to affordable prescription drugs. In fact, according to an analysis of U.S. Census data conducted by Families USA and the Center for Policy Alternatives, an estimated half million Marylanders would become eligible for immediate prescription drug price relief under this legislation.

Since these plans are created at the State level and don't impose any cost on the Federal Government, we don't believe States should have to ask the Federal Government's permission in order to establish them. For that reason, our legislation makes clear that Maryland—and any other State that chooses—can set up a State discount prescription drug plan without petitioning CMS for a section 1115 waiver. Additionally, since these plans rely on government purchasing power rather than government outlays to produce price discounts, we remove CMS's somewhat contrived requirement that states expend some undefined amount of their own money as part of these plans. Beyond modest administrative costs, it simply isn't necessary.

Madam Speaker, this legislation represents a significant opportunity to empower States to deliver prescription drug affordability to millions of our citizens who don't currently have it—at no cost to the Federal Government. I hope Congress seizes this opportunity, and I invite my colleagues' support.

150TH ANNIVERSARY OF JACKSON, COUNTY, MINNESOTA

HON. TIMOTHY J. WALZ

OF MINNESOTA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, August 1, 2007

Mr. WALZ of Minnesota. Madam Speaker, today I rise to commemorate the 150th anniversary of Jackson County, Minnesota.

The first settlers in what would become Jackson County were three brothers, William, George and Charles Wood. They established a trading post in the town of Springfield, which would later be renamed Jackson.

Jackson County was established on May 23rd, 1857, and named for Hon. Henry Jackson, the first merchant in St. Paul. The earliest years were not easy: Jackson, the county seat, was entirely deserted twice. But in 1865, settlers returned following the Civil War and put down their roots. Homes were built from native timber and prairie sod and a school house was constructed to serve the community.

From those early days, Jackson County has continued to grow. Today it is a leader in agriculture production and home to a beautiful courthouse and an historic state theatre.

I would like to congratulate the residents of Jackson County as they celebrate their 150th anniversary and wish them a bright future.

GOVERNMENT OF JAPAN TO APOLOGIZE

SPEECH OF

HON. DAVID WU

OF OREGON

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, July 30, 2007

Mr. WU. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H. Res. 121 to call on the Japanese government to formally and unequivocally acknowledge, apologize, and accept historical responsibility for its Imperial Army's coercion of young women, known as "comfort women," into sexual slavery during the World War II era.

I would first like to commend my distinguished colleague, Mr. HONDA, for introducing this important resolution and for his leadership and hard work on this critical matter. I further want to recognize the extraordinary friendship between Japan and the United States, a friendship which has spanned at least half a century.

This resolution is being considered today so that the truth about comfort women will remain in the history books.

An estimated 200,000 women were sexually exploited by the Japanese armed forces during Japan's military expansion and wartime occupation of Asia and the Pacific Islands from the 1930s through World War II. Although Koreans made up the majority of these euphemistically termed "comfort women," Chinese, Taiwanese, Filipino, Dutch, and Indonesian women also were victimized.

Comfort women were used for recreational sex by Japanese soldiers as a military strategy to increase the soldiers' efficiency. These women were mentally and physically dehumanized and subject to extreme sexual violence. Only a few hundred of these coura-

geous survivors of the World War II horror are still alive today.

Undoubtedly, today's Japan is a world leader and a valued ally to the United States. It is not the intent of Congress to punish Japan, but to help Japan acknowledge comfort women as part of its wartime history. An official, unambiguous apology from the Japanese government for its wartime atrocities is vital for historical record, emotional healing, and the education of future generations.

I support this resolution, and I urge my colleagues to do the same.

LEGALIZING INTERNET SPORTS GAMBLING IS DANGEROUS

HON. DONALD M. PAYNE

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, August 1, 2007

Mr. PAYNE. Madam Speaker, I would like to address the troubling issue of gambling on sports. In the past couple of weeks, basketball fans throughout the Nation have been shocked and saddened by revelations that a referee was gambling on games he officiated, and may have affected the outcomes of those games. A player or referee gambling on his own game is probably the single greatest betrayal that can be committed against fans of the sport.

The temptation to sports corruption does not come out of nowhere. It comes out of a culture where many people turn a blind eye to the fact that sports gambling is illegal in 49 States. And, as USA Today reported, athletes and officials become vulnerable when they develop a gambling problem on other sports, or even on other types of gambling.

I received a letter this week from the professional and collegiate sports associations—which I believe my colleague, the gentleman from New York (Mr. TOWNS), already placed in the RECORD—that reveals efforts in this Congress to legitimize sports gambling online. This is the last thing we need. We should help raise awareness of the threat that gambling poses to cherished American athletics. We should never put a stamp of approval on sports gambling.

Last year, I voted for the Unlawful Internet Gambling Enforcement Act of 2006, in part because our laws against sports gambling were being evaded and eroded by offshore gambling operators. Now the same companies we shooed out of the illegal marketplace in the U.S. last fall are back supporting H.R. 2046, which would license them to take bets, including sports bets, from Americans.

They have their slick arguments. They say the individual sports leagues can opt out—as if gambling on basketball could possibly be any more or less harmful than gambling on football or hockey or soccer. They say the bill will raise tax revenue. Well, the ways we can raise tax revenue are nearly infinite—that's no excuse for bad policy. They say legal gambling can be better monitored—but it was legal gambling that got Tom Donaghy deep in debt and drove him to turn to criminal gambling.

I agree with the sports associations and my colleague from New York (Mr. Towns) that the harms of sports gambling far outweigh any alleged benefits. I urge my colleagues to reject any efforts to legitimize sports gambling in this Nation.